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ABSTRACT

This study reassessed the series of four intensive summer institutes conducted at Mississippi State University on instructional strategies for culturally diverse students to determine the extent to which institute participants implemented these strategies in their respective schools or districts. The Strategies for Instructing Culturally Diverse Students (SICDS) Institute grew out of concerns about the quality of education available to African American students. The SICDS Institute was designed to enhance the awareness level of educators of the need to work more effectively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The study surveyed the 73 educators who had participated in the institutes over the summers of 1989 through 1992. Thirty-nine of these returned surveys. Preliminary results indicated that those responding to the survey had implemented these strategies to a great extent. Though it was difficult to conclude that the results reported were primarily a function of SICDS attendance, the Institute directors believed that the institute contributed to the result. SICDS directors were also influenced in these beliefs by the very positive evaluations of the institute given by survey respondents. An appendix contains survey data and sample survey responses. (Contains 13 references.) (JB)

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REASSESSMENT OF A PROGRAM FOCUSING ON INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

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REASSESSMENT OF A PROGRAM FOCUSING ON INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

During a four-year period from 1989 through 1992, Mississippi State University conducted a series of intensive summer institutes for a total of seventy-three (73) Mississippi educators. In each institute, participants identified strategies for addressing the educational needs of culturally diverse students centered around broad problem areas such as knowledge of pupil background, fair and equal treatment of pupils, and parent involvement in school activities.

An initial survey of the institute "graduates" for 1989, 1990, and 1991 was conducted in 1992. The survey results indicated that the respondents had implemented strategies and engaged in behaviors that were deemed appropriate for positive learning opportunities to occur in the school environment for culturally diverse students (Person, Amos, & Jenkins, 1992).

Since the initial evaluation excluded the sixteen (16) institute "graduates" for 1992 due to their recent involvement in the intensive program at that time, it was determined that a survey of all the graduates should be conducted. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to reassess the series of intensive summer institutes conducted at Mississippi State University in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992 to determine the extent to which institute participants have implemented strategies for working with culturally diverse students in their respective school or school district.

Overview of the Institute Development

The concept for the "Strategies for Instructing Culturally Diverse Students" (SICDS) Institute developed from an oral history project conducted with selected African-American educators in 1988. The educators who participated in the project were teachers, counselors or

administrators in the State of Mississippi during the civil rights movement period of 1960-1970.

In response to the question of whether or not the civil rights movement had resulted in improved educational opportunities for African-American students in the State of Mississippi, the majority of the participants indicated a qualified "yes." Specifically, the participants responded that those students who were part of that era have been quite successful in their careers. However, significant reservation was expressed about the current ability of elementary and secondary educational programs to adequately address the needs of African-American students. Problems identified by the project participants included the (1) lack of proper role models, (2) teacher apathy, (3) apparent lack of knowledge about the background and needs of students, and (4) apparent inability of many educators today to address these educational needs (Jenkins & Person, 1989). These problem areas were used to develop the conceptual framework for the SICDS Institute.

The SICDS Institute was designed to enhance the awareness level of educators (teachers, administrators, and counselors) of the need to work more effectively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Specifically, the institute focused upon that body of knowledge that has been found to be effective in the education of culturally diverse students. Scholars and practitioners were used to help achieve the objectives of the institute.

The SICDS Institute was planned, developed, and implemented based upon the following assumptions:

1. Each child within each aspect of possible classification (gender, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, exceptionality, sibling relationship, religious affiliation, etc.) brings an element of cultural diversity to the school environment that is unique and must be respected as such in the provision of an equal educational opportunity.

2. Mutual respect and acceptance of each individual in the educational organization are necessary preconditions for maximum benefits to be derived.
3. Educators need to know that their role is vitally important to the improvement of the quality of life.
4. Educators need to be empowered to assume full responsibility for their role in the total development of their pupils.
5. Educators need to make continuous and honest self-assessments for both personal and professional development to take place.
6. Personal and professional development among educators enhance their willingness to be concerned about both the academic and personal development of their pupils.

By using the above assumptions to guide our thinking, the directors of the SICDS Institute believe that we have made a positive difference and will continue to do so in the personal, professional, and academic development of educators and their pupils. This belief has been reinforced by the many positive comments made by the institute participants in their evaluation. Additionally, SICDS Institute participants have used materials to conduct related staff development programs in their individual school districts during the school year.

Survey Procedure

Development of Survey

One of the final responsibilities of SICDS Institute participants was to develop plans of action in small group arrangements, usually four to six members per group. The charge for each group was to identify strategies that are appropriate for effectively addressing the educational needs of culturally diverse students centered around broad problem areas. These plans of action were used by the SICDS directors to generate several positive statements related to broad problem areas of the school's environment. The statements were then further refined to eliminate duplication and improve their clarity. The final draft of the SICDS Institute Survey consisted of 25 survey items and five

preliminary questions which provide demographic information about the respondents such as primary responsibility, years of experience in education, gender, level of education, and race. Also, a statement was included at the end of the survey requesting respondents to identify and briefly describe other related strategies that they have implemented since their participation in the Institute.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of the 73 "graduates" of the SICDS Institutes in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992. Thirty-nine or 54 percent, of the returned surveys were determined to be usable for inclusion in this preliminary study.

Survey Instrument

Each SICDS "graduate" was requested, in writing, to complete the SICDS Institute Survey and return it by mail in a self-addressed envelope provided. Prior to mailing the survey, several telephone contacts were made to confirm current mailing addresses and to alert the "graduates" that the survey was forthcoming. As stated earlier, the survey consisted of five preliminary questions and 25 survey items. The "graduates" were asked to respond to the survey items by completing a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In the instructions, the SICDS "graduates" were asked to indicate the extent to which strategies identified in the plans of action completed by each class and the strategies studied in the SICDS Institute have been implemented by them in their respective school or school district.

Data Analysis and Results

Individual item responses, average item responses, and standard deviations were ascertained for each of the 25 survey items (see Table 1). With the exception of Items 1, 3, and 5, there was a high level of congruence among the respondents toward the positive side of the Likert-type scale. Comparatively, the initial survey conducted

in 1992 also indicated a high level of positive congruence among the respondents with the exception of Items 1, 2, and 3. Therefore, it appears that Item 1 (Students at my school receive fair and equal treatment) and Item 3 (My school has clear guidelines which allow for consistency in the discipline of students) continue to be critical areas of concern among the respondents. For the most part, however, the respondents clearly reported that they have either implemented strategies or engage in behaviors that are appropriate for positive learning opportunities to occur in the school environment for culturally diverse students.

Several of the respondents described other related strategies that they have implemented since their participation in the SICDS Institute. Some of the responses are included in Appendix A. These open-ended responses are also indicative of the positive impact of the SICDS Institute experience.

Implications and Recommendations

The present survey was conducted to determine the extent to which those educators completing the SICDS Institute at Mississippi State University during a four-year period from 1989 through 1992 have implemented strategies designed to enhance the learning opportunities of culturally diverse students in their respective school or school district. Preliminary results indicate that those responding to the survey have implemented these strategies to a great extent.

While it is difficult to conclude that the results reported by the respondents were primarily a function of their involvement in the SICDS Institute at Mississippi State University, it is a strong belief of the SICDS directors that the institute contributed to the survey results due, in part, to its intensity. The SICDS directors are also influenced by the very positive evaluations of the institute reported by the participants. Indeed, many of the participants have described the

institute as a most significant aspect of their professional and personal development.

It would appear that based upon the preliminary results of this survey, at least three recommendations should be considered.

1. A more comprehensive evaluation of the SICDS Institute should be conducted by considering such factors as participant level of educational attainment, years of experience as a professional educator, gender, race, and the socioeconomic status of the pupils within their respective school district.
2. More efforts to organize and conduct intensive staff development programs during the summer should be made for professional educators.
3. Teacher education programs should consider cultural diversity and multicultural education concepts as a pervasive, rather than an isolated, component of their program (Cannella & Reiff, 1994).

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Table 1

Average Responses and Standard Deviations of SICDS Institute Survey Items.

Survey Items	A. R.	S.D.
1. Students at my school receive fair and equal treatment.	3.921	1.075
2. My school has clear guidelines which allow for consistent grading practices.	4.184	.766
3. My school has clear guidelines which allow for consistency in the discipline of students.	3.923	1.085
4. I make an effort to get to know my students.	4.641	.537
5. I have encouraged staff development programs which focus on the proper treatment of students.	3.974	.707
6. I avoid prejudging students.	4.590	.549
7. I avoid making false assumptions about students.	4.590	.595
8. I avoid stereotyping of students.	4.718	.456
9. I make every effort to involve the parents of students in their child's educational experience.	4.410	.595
10. I send positive information home to parents about their child's progress.	4.282	.605
11. Parents are included on various committees and school programs in my school.	4.237	.913
12. I make efforts to understand and appreciate the differences among students.	4.590	.498
13. I make efforts to understand and appreciate differences among my colleagues.	4.605	.547
14. I encourage total community involvement in my school's program.	4.308	.694
15. I accept students as individuals.	4.744	.442
16. I accept my colleagues as individuals.	4.564	.502

17. I treat each student as I expect to be treated.	4.718	.456
18. I respect the ideas of others.	4.641	.486
19. I encourage the development of positive self-esteem among students.	4.667	.530
20. I am aware of the cultural differences among the students with whom I work.	4.684	.471
21. Active student participation is encouraged in my school.	4.436	.754
22. I maintain confidentiality in student conferences.	4.615	.493
23. Parental contact is encouraged on a regular basis in my school.	4.487	.721
24. I have high expectations for students.	4.744	.498
25. I use multicultural education principles in my instructional activities.	4.436	.641

Appendix A
Sample Survey Responses

1. I try very hard to give a variety of activities when giving special assignments to my students.

2. I have initiated a "Be Yourself Day"-students dress or bring a food from their native home. Discussion and sharing is used.

3. I try to demonstrate the character that I want to see in my students.

4. I have used various reading strategies in my classes. Some of the metacognitive strategies are SQR4, Reciprocal teaching and Read A Loud Approach.

5. I have conducted two workshops since my SICDS training-one at the site level and the other for student teachers at MSU. I also use every opportunity to discuss strategies for instructing the culturally diverse child with teachers who demonstrate a lack of understanding, especially since becoming an assistant principal at Louisville Elementary School. My SICDS training has helped me to help others understand the culturally diverse student.

6. We have had staff development on how to relate to and allow for differences in students (How to encourage all to do their best). We also encourage all teachers to teach about different cultures and their beliefs and teachings, etc.

7. I have held staff development on diversity; I incorporated black and other minorities who have made worthy contributions.

8. (I) work with and serve as adviser to a number of youth groups in school that promote worthwhile programs that can foster greater understanding of groups from different economic and cultural levels.